

And a strong America has been the world's strongest force for freedom, peace, and democracy in 1995. Our brave men and women today are in the snows of Bosnia, helping to uphold the peace agreement to end the worst bloodshed in Europe since World War II. And from the cobblestone streets of Northern Ireland to the sands of the Middle East, a strong America has helped to bring peace to regions long torn by strife.

Yes, 1995 has been a good year for America. Our people have accomplished a lot. And it goes without saying, we still have one major task to finish to top off the accomplishment of this year. We have to finish the job of balancing the budget and to do it in the right way.

As you know, for the last 2 weeks the Congress has refused to pass legislation that would keep the Federal Government open to serve the American people. This has never happened before for this length of time in the whole history of the Republic. And it's been very hard on three-quarter of a million public servants who have to pay rent and utilities and mortgage payments and buy food. And they're losing pay at holiday time. And it's also cut off services for millions of Americans who depend upon them.

This Tuesday, if the Government is not open, cleanup efforts will be stopped cold at 32 toxic waste sites in neighborhoods around our country. Next week, Federal funds for unemployment insurance will begin to run out, forcing States to scramble to find ways to keep helping workers who have lost their jobs. And the Meals on Wheels program to our senior citizens won't go forward. Every day, 9 of 10 workplace safety complaints go unanswered. And every day 2,500 people can't get guaranteed home mortgages. Every day, thousands of young people looking for college loans can't apply for them. If ever we needed a reminder that our Government is not our enemy, this is it.

Let me be clear: I am committed to balancing the budget. Our administration already has cut the deficit nearly in half, and I am determined to finish the job. For weeks I've been working in good faith with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to find common ground, to balance the budget in a way that reflects our values. Yesterday I

met well into the evening with Speaker Gingrich and Majority Leader Dole. And in just a few moments I will sit down with them again, along with the Democratic congressional leaders.

We are making real progress. We know that our work is not done. We know we have much to do, so that the American dream will remain alive for every citizen and so that we can come together as a people and so that America can remain the strongest force for peace the world has ever seen.

So on this New Year's, let's resolve that we will balance the budget, but that we'll do it in a way that will keep our country growing and that will be true to our basic values. That is, we'll balance the budget without gutting Medicare and Medicaid, without deeply cutting education or the environment, without raising taxes on working families. Let's resolve to reopen the Government and do it now. And let's resolve to act without rancor or partisan bitterness in the spirit of the new year and in the interests of the American people.

Nineteen ninety-five has been a year when we've been true to the best of America. If we'll just work hard and work together and follow our values, 1996 can be even better. Hillary and I want to wish you and your families a happy and healthy New Year.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:44 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

December 30, 1995

Budget Negotiations

The President. I want to be brief today because we're getting off to a little late start. We've got a lot to do. I have three things to say: I think we made a good start yesterday; we're making progress; and I believe we need to open the Government. I hope we can agree to do all that.

Bosnia

Q. Sir, do you know any more information on the soldier who was wounded in Bosnia?

The President. Our reports are sketchy, and I have tried to get an update, but what I do know is that there were apparently two vehicles and four soldiers involved. Only one was seriously hurt, and he has been medevaced to Croatia, in a hospital there, and we understand he's in stable condition.

But mines have always been our biggest concern, and we're working very hard on it, but that's what happened. And we'll continue to monitor it and do the best we can. The mission itself is going very well. The people have received our soldiers very well, and I'm very well satisfied with the progress. And I'm obviously very sorry this happened, but they're making good progress on the mine problem, but it's going to be difficult to get rid of them all.

Budget Negotiations

Q. [*Inaudible*]*—*the measure to get the workers back that's going to get through Congress?

Senator Dole. Well, it passed the House. We hope we can pass it in the Senate today, so make some progress.

Senator Daschle. We tried to pass a clean CR, one without any conditions. And that was objected to, but I hope we can work something out.

Q. But isn't the fact now that the Democrats are holding things up?

Senator Daschle. Not at all. As a matter of fact, as I said, we passed a continuing resolution—we had no conditions. It sent people back to work, and that was objected to. So we're not trying to hold anything up here. We hope we can get some sort of an agreement as early as today.

Q. Well, what's it going to take to get a deal?

Speaker Gingrich. Well, let me just say something. I think the President had a right—we're glad to have you all in. We have a lot of work to do. We made, I thought, real progress last night. It is not easy. We have very significant areas we have to work on, but I thought the spirit was very positive. We don't just want to get the Federal workers back, we want to get them paid. And in

order to do that, I think we've got to get this whole thing worked out. But I thought we had a great start last night. And with you all's permission, I think we can get a lot more done in the next few hours.

Q. Mr. President, is the message from the Democrats basically that they don't trust you?

The President. We've got to go to work. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Spec. Martin J. Begosh, USA, wounded when his vehicle hit a land mine in Bosnia on December 30. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders December 31, 1995

Budget Negotiations

Q. Mr. President, are you close to a deal today?

The President. Let me tell you where we are today. We had a very long discussion yesterday. We discussed almost all the issues where we had differences on our plans financially, in terms of the dollars. And this morning we're going to have an extensive discussion of the Medicare policy. And then we're going to give our staffs some instruction. We're going to meet again on Tuesday, and we're going to do our best to work through this and come to an accord.

My New Year's wish is that we'll get this balanced budget plan, and we'll do it in a way that protects the things that we care about, the Medicare, the Medicaid, the education and environment, the other issues. And we've been working at it. I've been very well pleased, and I think we've been somewhat successful because we haven't said very much about it. We've just got to keep working until we reach an accord.

Q. Mr. President, will you touch on—[*inaudible*]*—*negotiations—

Q. Will you leave town today without reopening the Government, of the three—

Speaker Gingrich. I'm sure we'll be talking about that, that's one of the things we